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A PUBLIC BENEFIT.

In a former paper (A Safe Investment, July 8, 1882) on the subject of Life Assurance, we drew attention to the inestimable blessing of being able to make adequate provision for future possibilities, and to the increased comfort and happiness of the man who has thus secured those dear to him from want and misery when deprived of his support. So far, we have dealt with this question of Assurance from a purely personal point of view. We now propose to enlarge our range of vision, and see what effect a more general appreciation of the benefits of Life Assurance would have upon a Community.

Much of the wealth of any nation will depend upon the amount of productive industry it possesses, and this productive industry needs stimulus for the development of its capabilities. As long as a people contents itself, as in uncivilised countries, with merely providing the necessities of life, so long will that people remain poor and helpless; but in proportion as men see and feel the advantages attached to industry, will be their efforts to secure those advantages for themselves.

The advantage we are now dealing with is one which can only be attained, by a large majority, as the result of thought and industry. The man who wishes to secure himself or his family from want in the future, will need to put forth his best energies in the present. Were this happy state of things in any sense a rule in our midst, there need be no fear of falling behind our neighbours, even where their natural advantages would seem to be greater than our own. But however patriotic we may be, there is little chance of our doing our best for the good of the nation alone; and one of the highest inducements to the thinking man to make the most of himself should be the reflection, that if he fail to put his shoulder to the wheel in good earnest, it may mean incalculable suffering to those he loves best, when he is taken from them. Unhappily, the tendency

of most men is not to do the largest possible amount of work without some very decided and powerful motive; and such a motive, to the man worthy of the name, will be found in the hope of securing a comfortable future, as well as a happy present, for those whose welfare depends so greatly on his exertions. Thus stimulated, he will be more than willing, even anxious to make the most of his time; and in proportion, trade will flourish.

Another national benefit derivable from Assurance, as affecting our habits of prudence, forethought, and industry, will be the lessening of taxation whilst giving increased power to pay. Is there any man who at some time or other does not feel as a heavy burden the weight of those terrible 'rates and taxes' which add so seriously to the year's out-goings? And yet, were the practice of Life Assurance, for which we contend, more generally diffused, there would be a vast reduction in two very important items to be found on our present rate-papers, namely, poor-rates and the cost of repression of crime. As to poor-rates, no one who has come into personal contact with the poverty-stricken, or who has taken the trouble to investigate the causes which bring so many applicants for parish relief, can doubt the fact that the vast majority of suffering of this order arises from preventable causes—causes, moreover, to which, in the main, forethought would have dealt a death-blow. Over-crowding of dwellings is one of the fruitful sources of illness, with its consequent train of poverty and wretchedness. But if evil habits grow and increase, manly determination has a leaven of its own, and has a distinct tendency not to be content with doing its work in one direction only, but progresses from improvement to improvement. So, in the present instance, a man who has secured an Assurance policy on his life, and finds he is able to keep up his annual payments by the exercise of economy and thrift, will soon be discontented at finding himself cramped and inconvenienced for want of better houseroom, and the chances are that he will set to

work to improve his surroundings by a further exercise of forethought and industry.

The question of intoxicating drink was touched upon in our former article on this subject; but it is really impossible to get anything like an approximate estimate of the amount of poverty, as well as of crime, induced by its over-indulgence. Many a man, and, alas that it should be so! many an educated man, has been, under its influence, reduced from comfort and respectability to utter degradation and misery; and many a broken-hearted wife has wept tears of agony, as one after another of the things she brought with such pride to furnish her home, has gone to feed the degraded appetite of him who promised to 'love and cherish' her. Then, perhaps she makes desperate efforts to keep up the home and to find bread for hungry little ones; but more than this she cannot do, for anything the pawnbroker will take is sure to go as fuel to feed the fire of the drunkard's thirst. So, in course of time, when bodily health fails, she and hers may be found seeking for admission into that workhouse, at the idea of which she used to shiver, and wonder how people ever came down to needing such help. She understands now only too well how the love of drink has power to drag its victims down to almost indefinite depths of sorrow and shame.

Now, all this cruel suffering and final coming upon the parish might have been prevented, had the head of the household grasped the idea of his responsibilities, and by due exercise of his powers, made provision for the lives of himself and of his wife and children. Had he given the matter anything approaching proper consideration, he could not have failed to see that to waste in self-indulgence the money that, wisely used, would secure a comfortable future for his dependents, could scarcely be called by a lighter name than that of deliberate villainy.

That the above sketch of the life of a drunkard's wife is no fancy picture, thousands could testify; and even where the family does not go into 'the house,' there are many ways in which the parish is made to give relief, where, with only ordinary prudence and industry, no such help would be needed. As an instance of the under-hand way in which parish relief is extracted, take the following case, well known to the writer. A strong, able-bodied man, the father of three or four children, would work only two or three days a week, and spent the rest of his time between drinking and sleeping, his delicate wife being left to feed and clothe herself and the children. One of the little ones sickened and died, and when the question of burial came, the father absented himself for a time, in order that the wife might go before the Board and declare herself deserted. Of course, the child had to be buried; and the funeral added one more item to the long list of that sort of parish relief which would neither be asked nor given but for the indulgence of evil habits.

It is not unfrequently urged that sobriety is desirable were it for nothing else than the relief to poor-rate and the diminished cost of repressing crime that would ensue. And yet, another side to this argument has recently been brought into prominent notice. At present there are

thirty-one millions sterling of our national income derived from exciseable liquors, being more than one-third of the whole national revenue. Of course, any reduction in the revenue from exciseable liquors, would, even under the most advantageous conditions, require to be made up by increased taxation in other directions. The great argument for sobriety, therefore, does not bear so much upon any slight saving to the ratepayers that might ensue, as upon the increased purity and happiness of the people that would follow from it. It is the *moral* results that should be kept most prominently in view.

Putting aside the question of drink, there is frequently amongst the poor a lamentable want of anything like proper provision for the future. It is not unusual to find that the future has not been looked at in any way; or even when it has, that the provision made will little more than cover the expenses of burial; and in consequence of this, the number of widows and orphans who annually claim parish help is very great. Yet there is no real reason why matters should stand thus; the poor man in regular work should be as well able to provide for wife and children as the richer man for his. Of course, their wants will be in proportion to their previous manner of life, and in this proportion it would be well if each labouring man could be compelled to make the all-important provision. Were this so, how perceptible would be the difference in our poor-rates!

But in so writing of the poor man's improvidence, we do not by any means intend to lay the burden of blame on his shoulders alone. His time, as a rule, is too much taken up with bodily labour to give him the leisure for thought and reflection which falls naturally to the share of his wealthier neighbour. It should, therefore, be the care of the man who has time and brain at his command to seek to instruct his less privileged brother as to how to make the most of what he has, and to do this in such a way as to be able to provide for the future. But in order to teach, it is absolutely necessary that practice shall accompany precept; for it will be little use to tell the poor man to care for his wife and children, if the instructor's own family has not first been secured from possibilities of preventable evil in the future.

And sad as is the heavy burden caused by avoidable expenses in regard to the poor, still sadder is that other heavy item of 'prisons, reformatories, and police-force.' A very little reflection will show that all causes which affect the one affect the other; and, in fact, the root of the matter in both cases lies in the greater prevalence, within certain lines, of bad over good habits. The most patriotic of Englishmen can hardly claim for his countrymen the merit of being a provident people; and unhappily we are in the main content with our improvidence, and do not trouble ourselves to consider to what very serious evils it may and does lead. We venture to say that not a tithe of those who shake their heads over our gigantic pauperism and our huge prison-system have any idea of how closely these acknowledged evils are associated with that want of frugality and forethought, which, though perhaps equally acknowledged, is, as a rule, passed over with the slightest possible notice. Yet, take

the case of a man of right principle working his very best at whatever labour falls to his share, making the most of his earnings, and at the same time securing comfortable provision for the future. It is impossible to picture such a one applying for help from the parish. And it is quite certain that as far as he is concerned, there will be no need of taxation on the score of repression of crime.

Now, what is true of the individual is equally true of the community at large, and nothing will permanently diminish the annals of crime but the wider spread of good habits and right principles. It need hardly be said that a man is not living up to this ideal whose thoughts go no farther into the future than the providing for daily wants, and who fails to reflect on the fact that he, the bread-winner, may at any moment be removed, to the grievous suffering of a family left destitute.

Looking at the many advantages we have thus considered as accruing, both to the individual and to the community, from the practice of Life Assurance, there is no room for wonder at the way in which it spreads when its value is once felt; but, on the contrary, the mind is filled with astonishment that this boon is refused or neglected by so many; and we venture to hope that the more the subject is discussed and brought before the notice of the public, the more will men be found willing and anxious to avail themselves of what may well be described as a Public Benefit.

ONE FALSE, BOTH FAIR;

OR, A HARD KNOT.

CHAPTER VII.—THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND.

THE carriage having rolled away on swift wheels from before the portico of Castel Vawr, the two ladies who were left behind looked somewhat wistfully into one another's faces, the younger timidly, the elder with a pitying tenderness that perhaps had never till that day and hour softened the proud eyes of Lady Barbara Montgomery. There lies, deep down, and undreamed of by strangers, in the hearts of most women, even the coldest and the haughtiest, a well-spring of motherly kindness that waits for the touch of the magic wand to let loose its waters.

'I am very sorry, my dear—very sorry, Clare, for you,' said Lady Barbara in a very low voice.

'Thank you, dear aunt; your kindness—is all'— And then the voice of the youthful speaker was choked in her emotion.

The majestic aunt of the late Marquis looked almost apprehensively around her, as she somewhat stiffly extended her strong, bony hand, to give support to the slight delicate form of the half-fainting girl that nestled by her side. The servants! There were several, only too many, of them present; and it is a golden rule and canon of conduct with members of that higher aristocracy to which Lady Barbara belonged, that all unseemly manifestations of emotion must be concealed from those who eat our bread and wear our livery. Lady Barbara's own idea of the proper demeanour of a grand gentleman, and still more of a great lady, such as a Marchioness

of Leominster, was probably very much akin to the stern stoicism of those Red Indian warriors who bear the bitterest torments which their captors can inflict with a scornful composure that laughs at pain. But all of us are not of the same heroic mould; and Lady Barbara felt sincere compassion for her forlorn companion.

'Clare—my poor, dear Clare—come with me—come to your own rooms. They have been ready for you, ready and waiting for days past,' said Lady Barbara, with a wonderful gentleness, for her; and she who was addressed thus permitted herself to be led away. Of course the servants did not stare, nor did they whisper to one another, as the well-trained phalanx in the great marbled hall of Castel Vawr broke up, like so many soldiers when the bugle has sounded the welcome call 'dismiss,' and footmen, butlers, grooms of the chamber, dispersed. But servants have tolerably sharp eyes where their employers are concerned, and Lady Barbara had not the slightest doubt that the young Marchioness, the strange circumstances of her arrival, the sudden dispute between the sisters, the abrupt departure of one of them, the agitation of the one who remained, would be discussed, and rediscussed, conned, weighed, and criticised, in servants' hall and still-room, until the subject was worn threadbare. It vexed her, she who was a stickler for prerogative, and who sorrowed always over idle gossip or newspaper tattle concerning peccant members of her own order, because it gave occasion for her worldly inferiors to speak evil of dignities. At anyrate—there was one comfort in that—even Rumour, painted full of tongues, as in the days of the old Elizabethan drama, could not, for very dearth of accurate or minute information, find anything positive to say that would detract from the credit of the great House of Montgomery-Leominster, of which the headquarters were at Castel Vawr.

The rooms that had been got ready for the widowed Marchioness were sumptuous and spacious, and did credit to the famous firm of decorative upholsterers who had sent in the rich furniture, and done all that could be done, in a tasteful way, to make a bower worthy of Wilfred's beautiful young wife. These were the very apartments that had been prepared, but a few short months ago, so it seemed, for the reception of the bride; and now—

'I feel more wretched than before!' exclaimed Lady Barbara's youthful companion. 'Poor Wilfred—it seems but yesterday; and Cora, too, is gone; and—and— But you will think me foolish!' she exclaimed; while the deferential housekeeper who stood there looked excessively embarrassed; and Lady Barbara's abigail, and Pinnett the travelling maid, threw sidelong glances at each other.

'Not foolish, dear Clare,' replied the chatelaine of Castel Vawr, very gently, and then turned her eagle beak and bushy eyebrows towards the servants.—'Lady Leominster is tired after her journey. I will stay with her, Mrs Blew. When I ring, her maid, the Marchioness's maid, can come.'

Mrs Blew the housekeeper made her reverential courtesy as she and Pinnett retired.

'I am so sorry—cut to the heart—for you, my poor, poor child!' said Lady Barbara, when those two were left alone together, as she folded the young girl in her arms.

Very prettily, very gracefully, did the slender girl submit to that caress. 'I shall do very well, dear, good, kind Aunt Barbara,' she said, in a voice that was almost steady. 'Your great kindness, your noble strength of principle and purpose, seem to give me strength—to me, who need it so much,' she added plaintively. 'At first, just at first, the memories that these dear rooms called up—the recollection of my darling Wilfred—were almost too much for my poor powers of endurance. But it is Cora—my own, loved, misguided sister, that—'

Lady Barbara drummed indignantly with her large well-shaped foot upon the soft carpet. 'It was a wicked, wicked attempt!' she said, almost as a soliloquist might speak.

But her voice was audible to the quick ears of her fair companion, who exclaimed eagerly: 'No, no, dearest, good Lady Barbara! Do not call Cora wicked, for my sake. I know her—my twin sister—and indeed, indeed she is good; and I love her, and grieve over her sin, and—Am I wrong and harsh in calling what has happened a sin, when I speak of my own sister?' she asked piteously, and with an appealing hand half uplifted.

Lady Barbara, who was a head the taller of the two, bent stiffly and kissed her. 'You are a noble girl—too good for this world, with its hollow shams and base deceits,' said Lady Barbara, whose eyes were dimmed by actual tears. 'Yes; it was a sin; yes; it was mean, vile, mercenary—what I never thought possible on the part of any one who, like Miss Carew, although a commoner, was—'

'Of late,' interrupted the girl, 'between my poor Cora and myself there has been more reticence, less frankness in our intercourse. My sister has seemed to me to be always preoccupied, always on her guard. I have fancied—Dear Lady Barbara, may I speak my mind to you?'

Lady Barbara signified her cordial assent. Even a normal share of feminine curiosity would have insured her as a willing listener on such a theme. But the root-principle of her life was loyalty to the great House from which she sprang, and nothing which affected the honour or the prosperity of the ancient Montgomery race could fail to interest her. She may have thought—nay, had thought—that her late nephew, the Marquis, had been carried too far by his admiration for a pretty face. Falcons, so held Lady Barbara, should mate with falcons; and a mere baronet's daughter, and—for nobody is quite consistent where cash is concerned—the daughter of a quasi-bankrupt baronet, was scarcely a fitting Lady Paramount of Castel Vawr and the great estate that the old lords-marchers, her own forefathers, had held from the Crown by tenure of lance-thrust and sword-stroke, as became their wardenship of the wild Welsh border. If Clare Carew had but been a Lady Clare, sprung from one of those pushing families that our English Elizabeth loved to promote from the flat civic cap to the Earl's coronet, then indeed would Lady Barbara have been satisfied; but as it was,

she had to make the best of the situation. And yet, the widowed bride was beautiful, gentle, and winning, while there was something propitiatory even in her helpless need for protection.

'My poor sister,' resumed the girl, in a faltering voice, 'seemed changed, strangely so, from what she had been when we embarked on board the *Cyprus* for our sad voyage home. Among our fellow-passengers was a person—a lady—a foreign lady of title, whom we had known, when far up the Nile, before my dear husband's death. I do not like to say that Madame de Lalouve—Countess Louise de Lalouve, she called herself—forced her acquaintance upon us. But she rendered us some little service. She had special privileges from the Egyptian authorities; knew the country and the languages well; and was a bold, experienced traveller, quite unlike us two timid English girls; and hence arose almost an intimacy. There was something fascinating, I confess, about her manner; and her conversation was very amusing, for she seemed to have been everywhere and to know everybody.'

'I daresay she did,' responded Lady Barbara, with an expressive tightening of her firm lips and an expressive arching of her black eyebrows. Lady Barbara had never been far-travelled. She had been shown Paris and the Rhine and the baths of Kissingen, in her gouty father's lifetime; and she had not approved of Paris; had considered the Rhine a big, overrated river; and regarded the baths of Kissingen as a penal settlement. She had a very contemptuous estimate of foreign countesses in general, and was by no means prepossessed in favour of Louise de Lalouve.

'I shrank myself, perhaps instinctively, from our foreign friend's society, went on the other; but Cora, my poor sister, seemed to find some fatal attraction in the woman's pernicious company. She—Countess Louise, I mean—had a perplexing way of talking, half in jest, so as to make wrong appear right, and to confuse good and evil; and this, with her sudden appearances and disappearances, and the fact that her very nationality was a puzzle, combined to earn for her, in Egypt, the nickname of the Sphinx. Somehow, Cora was always talking to her, and used to quote her opinions and sayings as though she had been an oracle indeed. During the passage to Southampton the conversations between Cora and the stranger were very frequent; and—I hope I am not uncharitable in saying, that to the counsels of this dangerous adviser may be perhaps attributed the dreadful resolve which at last urged Cora—dear erring Cora—to—to'—Here she hid her face.

And Lady Barbara, with honest indignation, struck in: 'Of course it was! The miserable girl has let her weak head be turned by the vile promptings of this wicked adventuress—Frenchwoman, Russian—which did you say?—Yes; I see it now. It was no madness, no caprice; but a plot, a base, cowardly plot, to rob a sister of her rank and her inheritance, of all she owed to her dear dead husband!'

'Not all, Lady Barbara,' sobbed the girl. 'The memory of his love, the recollection of his tender kindness—of those, no subterfuge could—ever—have deprived me.'

Then Lady Barbara took the young girl in her arms, and kissed her, quite in a motherly way, and henceforth reconciled herself to the choice that her noble nephew had made. 'You are one out of a million, my dear; and my poor Wilfred was quite right to love you as he did—quite right!' she said, in her energetic way. 'You have been shamefully dealt with—shamefully! Luckily, when your sister made her audacious statement, Mr Pontifex himself, who has so long managed the law business of the family, was here; and I too, who have seen too much of the world to be very easily deceived. But you will be ill, dear child, with this excitement; and indeed you have had neither rest nor refreshment since you came among us—a sorry welcome to Castel Vawr. Let us avoid exciting topics, such as we have been discussing, for the remainder of the day, and—'

'I must win her back. I will write—I will plead with her not to reject my love—I must write, Aunt Barbara!'

Lady Barbara looked grim. She was one of those who very much prefer that a sinner should suffer for his sin—that the taste of ashes, so to speak, should be hot and bitter to the mouths of those who wilfully prefer Dead Sea apples to wholesome fruits. But she made a concession. 'Well, Clare,' she made answer; 'you shall write, of course, if you please; and I will write too, to the brother and natural protector of this young lady. No doubt, if she repents, forgiveness can be promised her; and no doubt, too, in such a case you will make provision for her comfort, so that she should not be a mere pensioner on the too scanty income of your brother Sir Pagan. But you will see yourself afterwards, when you have time to reflect calmly on what has occurred, that Miss Carew can scarcely be a safe or an appropriate companion for the Marchioness of Leominster.'

'I want to win her back,' was the plaintive rejoinder. And for the time being, the subject dropped.

Then the bell was rung and the servants summoned. There was much to be done. A Marchioness of Leominster, a mistress of so magnificent a house as Castel Vawr, is among the great ones of the earth; and as such, does not quite belong to herself, but is a necessary and imposing portion of the social machinery which befits her rank and station. Trunks had to be unpacked, and wardrobes arranged by deft fingers; but that was a mere matter of detail, easily, if slowly, got through. Then tea was prepared in the French Room, so called—a marvel of Parisian art and taste, and soft subdued mixture of cream and pink and gold. Of rare art, too, were the embossed trays on which were the pretty, costly toys of the tea-service, every cup of which had been a loving study for a painter worthy of more celebrity than the daintiest teacup can afford. Presently there was the ceremony of dressing for dinner, wherein Pinnett had the assistance of a new, younger, and perhaps over-zealous maid, whose highest sphere of service had been the mansion of a beknighted alderman, and who had come to learn the difference between Sir Peter Pringle's daughters and a real Marchioness, and was therefore anxious to justify her promotion.

Lastly, there was dinner—a meal which, under the circumstances, was about as cheerful as a funeral feast in ancient Egypt. There was something almost portentous in the appearance of that vast solemn dining-room, with the grim array of historical portraits on the walls, long-dead ancestors and ancestresses, in armour or in cloth of gold or robes of state, in ruff and farthingale, in hoop and satin sacque, frowning or smirking from the canvas on the present occupants of the great gloomy banqueting hall. There was but little talk. The most persistent of *raconteurs* would have felt his spirits damped by the surroundings; and Lady Barbara elicited little beyond monosyllables from her companion, who indeed seemed somewhat awed by the sombre splendour that surrounded her.

'I am so tired,' said the fair inmate of Castel Vawr, rather timidly, after dinner; and it was not very long before she wished Lady Barbara good-night, and retired to her own apartments, dismissing as early as she could the attendance of her maid. One by one, the lighted windows in the great Border castle grew dark, and only the clear pure moonlight shone upon the gray masonry and the many casements, and all was hushed. Perhaps the last watcher in Castel Vawr was the newly returned traveller herself, who, while others slept, stood long, unwearying, at a window of her room, which commanded a glorious prospect of mountain, stream, and wood. 'A great prize,' she murmured unconsciously, as her eyes bade adieu for the night to the moonlit landscape—'a prize worth keeping.'

THE SOLAR CORONA.

WHEN a moderately magnified image of the sun, suitably darkened, is thrown upon a sheet of white paper, the centre of the disc is seen to be brighter than the edges. This fact, strange to relate, was not early recognised. Galileo distinctly says that the image appears 'equally bright in all its parts.' Lambert also held the same view, adding, that 'there is no person who does not admit this fact.' Bouguer, the inventor of the heliometer, was the first to dispute it. He fancied that the eye might be incapable of detecting the real difference in the luminosity of the sun's surface, owing to its insensible gradation from the centre to the edges; and in order to put his idea to the test of direct experiment, he isolated the centre of the solar image, and also a portion of equal extent near the border, and compared them. The intermediate degrees of brightness being thus got rid of, the relative dimness of the border region became at once apparent. The conclusion arrived at by Bouguer was, that 'the brightness of the central portion of the sun is to the brightness of a portion situated at three-fourths of the radius, measuring from the centre, as forty-eight to thirty-five.' With slight modification, this conclusion has been adopted by Laplace, Sir John Herschel, Airy, and other modern astronomers.

But if ocular evidence other than that obtainable by photometric methods be wanted, it is to be found in the results of photography. Photographic pictures of the sun unmistakably show a shading off towards the border of the solar disc.

Now, this circumstance is not without its important significance. Of course, the centre of the sun's disc is slightly nearer to us than the edges; but any difference of brightness due to this cause must be totally inappreciable. The fact of the luminous intensity diminishing as it does can only be due to the *absorption* of some of the rays by an imperfectly transparent envelope. The reason of this is obvious enough. The rays of the moon, when overhead, have to pass through a smaller extent of our atmosphere to reach the eye of an observer, than when she is near the horizon; and conversely, the eye of the observer has to penetrate a thinner layer of air in the former case than in the latter. So with the sun. A solar beam emanating from the centre of his apparent disc corresponds to the case of a moon that is right overhead; and a beam from his extreme edge, to a moon on the horizon; and if we suppose the envelope which surrounds him to be absorptive, the beam in the latter instance runs a far greater chance of being absorbed than in the former, having so much farther to travel through the absorbing medium. As observation shows that more rays *are* absorbed near the borders of the disc than in the centre, producing a corresponding diminution of light, it is reasonably inferred that an invisible solar envelope, or atmosphere, does exist, and that its nature, whatever it be, is such as to make it an absorbent of light.

As everybody knows, a solar eclipse is produced by the dark body of the moon coming between us and the sun, and so intercepting his beams. When a total eclipse takes place, the moon entirely covers the sun's disc; hence, on such occasions, we should expect the orb to be blotted out of the sky for the time being. But as a matter of fact he is not so. The black moon is seen superimposed upon what we ordinarily regard as the sun; but all around the sombre disc, a bright glory of light is visible, extending far out from the edges, and throwing into clear relief the body of our eclipsing satellite. What is this light? It may be one of two things. It may be a lunar atmosphere brilliantly illuminated by the sun behind; or it may be a solar atmosphere, of inferior brightness to the sun himself, which only becomes visible when the superior light is withdrawn or concealed.

That it is not the first, we have abundant proof. Leaving out of consideration the many evidences that the moon has *not* an atmosphere of appreciable height or density, we have the circumstance that the glory in question, when the lunar and solar discs do not exactly coincide, forms a pretty uniform fringe around the latter disc, quite irrespective of the position of the former. The inference is unquestionable. The fringe of light belongs to the sun, not to the moon. It is, in fact, the *corona*, or coronal atmosphere, whose existence we have already been led to infer from the appearance of the sun's surface.

Respecting the nature of this solar appendage, we know but little. From its shading effect upon the solar disc, we gather that it has the power of absorbing light; but anything more than that we are not warranted in assuming from the phenomenon. Then its luminosity is so faint—compared with that of the sun—that it is only visible during the totality of an eclipse; and eclipses are so rare, and of such exceedingly short duration when they do occur, that knowledge obtainable only while they last must necessarily be of slow growth. On this ground, the approaching eclipse of May 6, 1883, is being looked forward to with unusual interest. Whilst on ordinary occasions the duration of totality is not more than one or two minutes, it happens that the conditions in May next are such as to favour a totality of no less than six minutes. The opportunity will be eagerly seized to put rival views to the test.

But even while astronomers are impatiently waiting for this happy chance, the startling announcement is made, that a method has been discovered by which the corona may be studied independently of eclipses—from day to day instead of for a minute or two on rare occasions. The author of this important discovery is Dr William Huggins, the eminent observer, who has been so successful in his application of the spectroscope to the problems of celestial physics.

During the total eclipse of May last, which was observed by an English expedition in Egypt, Professor Schuster succeeded in obtaining a photograph of the corona's spectrum. The spectrum, it will be remembered, is the coloured band obtained by passing the rays of light through a glass prism. An examination of this photograph showed that the different colours into which the light of the corona was resolved by the spectroscope were not equally strong—the violet end of the spectrum being considerably stronger than the rest. Now, violet light has a more powerful chemical action than either red or yellow. It is indeed chiefly to the violet rays in sunlight that the process of photography is due. It occurred, therefore, to Dr Huggins that this abnormal strength of what we may call the 'photographic rays' in the case of the corona—this point of difference between the light of the sun and the light of the corona—might be utilised to render the latter visible.

We have already said that the corona, except during an eclipse, is quite invisible to the eye because its feeble light is overpowered by the glare of the sun. Yellow rays are the ones which have the greatest luminous effect, and the yellow rays emanating from the sun are of the same relative degree of intensity as those emanating from the corona. Hence it follows that, so far as direct vision is concerned, it is impossible for the one to be distinguished from the other. Throw the image upon a photographic plate, and we have no better result. The light of the two is so nearly identical that the difference is not apparent. But *keep back all but the violet rays*, and then we find the corona come out in our picture; for, as we have seen, the violet rays are relatively stronger in the light of the corona, and these rays are the most effective in photography. That is Dr Huggins's discovery. He sifts the light of the sun and a

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portion of the sky near it of the less photographic rays, receives the image on a sensitised plate, and so gets a picture of the solar corona.

Great improvements in the process will doubtless be made ere long; and with them, our knowledge of the wonderful luminary will increase, not by occasional fits and starts, as heretofore, but steadily and progressively.

PICTURE-STEALING.

WRITING of Fra Angelico's beautiful altar-piece in the Louvre, Mrs Jameson says: 'It was painted for the church of St Dominic at Fiesole, where it remained till the beginning of the present century. How obtained, it does not appear, but it was purchased by the French government in 1812.' If the seller was a Frenchman, in all probability the picture had been stolen from the original owners. Napoleon the Great believed in the old maxim that all is fair in love and war, and had no compunctions about despoiling his foes and enriching Paris at their expense; and although the capture of that city by the allies righteously entailed no little thinning of the treasures of the Louvre, its galleries yet hold masterpieces of art that would not decorate their walls if everybody had his own.

What the Emperor did for France's profit, his generals did for their own. Dessolle carried off one of Murillo's many paintings of 'Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception' from the Palace of Madrid; which was afterwards sold by his daughter, and eventually found a home at the Hague. Sebastiani prevailed upon the Duke of Alcudia to present him with a St Thomas; but the Duke had himself stolen 'The Martyrdom of St Peter the Dominican'—now at St Petersburg—from the Church of the Inquisition at Seville, leaving in its place a copy by Joaquin Cortes. These were but petty transactions compared with those effected by Marshal Soult in the carrying off of pictures. Lucky was the Spanish church or convent that escaped having its walls stripped at the instance of this military connoisseur, who transformed the French War Office into a picture-gallery; a gallery that would have been filled to repletion, had not the Duke of Dalmatia's hurried departure from Spain, under pressure from Wellington, compelled him to leave behind him some hundreds of pictures ready for conveyance to France. As it was, Soult's collection realised no less than sixty thousand pounds when brought to the hammer in 1852; a sufficient proof of his industry and judgment.

On one of his fifteen Murillos, the Marshal told Colonel Gurwood he set especial value, because it had saved the lives of two very estimable persons. 'He threatened to shoot them if they refused to give up the picture!' was an aide-de-camp's private explanation of his chief's remark. This may have been the 'Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception,' purchased at the sale by the French government. While following Sir John Moore's retreating army, Soult captured two Capuchin monks, and instead of executing them as spies, ordered them to show the way to their convent. There he saw the Murillo; and asking what sum would buy it, was informed

by the Prior that a hundred thousand francs had been offered for the painting.—'I will give you as much again,' said Soult; and seeing there was no help for it, the Prior agreed to sell at that price.—'You will give me up my two brethren?' said he.—'Certainly,' replied the Marshal. 'If you desire to ransom them, it will give me great pleasure to gratify your wish; the price of their lives is two hundred thousand francs.' Thus it was that the lives of two estimable persons were saved by the Murillo; and a masterpiece bought without the buyer's purse being a penny the poorer by the transaction.

Another of the Marshal's notable acquisitions was a Murillo belonging to a Spanish church, from which some person unknown had cut away the figures of the Madonna and Child. The missing portions were replaced by the work of a modern hand; and in this state the mutilated picture hung in the Soult Gallery until the dispersion of the collection, and then found a purchaser, who, by an extraordinary piece of good fortune, came, some years later, into possession of the long-absent Virgin and Child, and was able to make the picture perfect again. Where he obtained them, we are not told. In Mr Stirling's *Annals of the Artists of Spain*, published in 1848, a Murillo belonging to an English gentleman is thus described: 'Our Lady standing, with the Infant Saviour in her Arms. This picture is supposed to be the upper half of a composition representing the Virgin standing on clouds, and supported by cherubs, of which Marshal Soult is said to possess the remainder, and to call it *La Vierge Coupee*.' If this was not the welcome 'find' of the *Vierge Coupee*'s owner, there must be another Murillo somewhere wanting the better half.

To steal a picture is bad, to steal part of one is a thousand times worse. Seville owns many great paintings, but none on which its citizens set such store as their cathedral's colossal representation of 'The Appearance of the Infant Jesus to St Anthony,' a *chef-d'œuvre* bringing the artist ten thousand reals, and for which Spaniards aver the Duke of Wellington vainly offered as many ounces of gold as would cover it; equal, it has been calculated, to the sum of forty-two thousand five hundred and twenty pounds. On the fifth of November 1874, the custodians of the cathedral had the mortification of discovering that some sacrilegious ruffian had cut away nearly a quarter of the famous masterpiece, the figure of the saint having vanished from its accustomed place. A large reward was offered for its recovery; but the thief had not dared to attempt disposing of his acquisition in Europe. He went farther afield. One day, a Spaniard, calling himself Fernando Garcia, waited upon Mr Schaus, a well-known picture-dealer in New York, and announced his anxiety to sell a treasure of art that had been in the possession of his family for many years. The precious heirloom proved to be an oval painting about seven feet high, tacked to a stretcher of indubitable American manufacture. Mr Schaus asked his visitor to put a price upon it; and obtained the missing St Anthony for two hundred and fifty dollars; for which sum he transferred it to the Spanish consul. Upon being arrested for the theft, Garcia

protested his innocence, and declared he was ready to return to Spain, to clear himself; a bold offer, considering the story he had told Mr Schaus. He would seem to have known what he was about; for, being sent to Spain by the same ship as the recovered saint, he was set at liberty by the authorities, and never was heard of more.

England has never suffered the humiliation of seeing her museums and galleries rifled by a foreign soldiery; her own people are answerable for any art-losses she has sustained. When Charles II. came home to enjoy his own, he found much that was his own by right of succession had departed. Some of the Whitehall pictures had found new quarters in the Palace of Madrid; others had been purchased by noble collectors at home; and, if Christopher Clapham did not lie to Secretary Nicholas, Lady Temple helped herself to one of the queen's pictures. Years afterwards, this kleptomania feat was bettered by Catharine of Braganza, who, returning to her native land, carried off with her several pictures that had taken her fancy, stopping the Lord Chamberlain's mouth by giving him one he especially desired to possess.

We do not find another case of picture-stealing in England until the middle of the present century, when a number of paintings mysteriously disappeared from the Earl of Suffolk's residence at Charlton Park. This was in 1856. Writing of the event, the present Earl says: 'The stolen canvases were hidden away in London—one, the gem of the collection, behind a press in the War Office, where the thief, who had formerly been valet to my father, held a situation as clerk. The pictures were eventually recovered by advertisement, which chanced to meet the eye of a dealer who had purchased one of them, and was in treaty for another. When the thief arrived with the second consignment, he was promptly given into custody, and was ultimately awarded seven years' penal servitude. He said at the trial, that whilst in service at Charlton he had heard much talk of the immense value of these pictures; and he expressed astonishment and regret at the want of appreciation displayed by the trade, when such works of art were submitted to them. The one he had sold—a small Leonardo—had realised only eight pounds.'

One of the trade showed he could appreciate a notable picture by paying ten thousand guineas for a Gainsborough, as to the genuineness of which artists and connoisseurs were alike divided in opinion. The painting so well sold in 1876 was a nearly whole-length portrait of the famous Duchess of Devonshire; said to have been purchased by a picture-dealer for fifty pounds, and sold again by him to Mr Wynn-Ellis at a profit of ten pounds. Mr Agnew had good reason to repent his bargain. It had been in his possession less than a month, when it was cut out of its frame while on exhibition in Messrs Agnew's Gallery in Old Bond Street. The picture was safe when the Gallery was closed for the night; but next morning the frame was hanging empty in its place, with the stretcher, denuded of canvas, lying in front of it; and the fate of 'The Duchess' is a mystery to this day.

Incited possibly by this successful though profitless theft, a workman employed at Lancaster Gate served Cooper's 'Monarch of the Meadows,'

in Mr Allcroft's collection there, in the same unceremonious fashion. Cooper's picture, however, was ultimately restored to its owner, and the purloiner punished as he deserved. A clever rogue robbed the collection of a Viennese connoisseur of a sixteenth-century portrait of a Dutch Admiral, much valued by its possessor. He offered a reward for its recovery; and was waited upon by a stranger, who, after some bargaining, agreed to see that the picture was restored, upon the reward being paid and no questions asked. Once more the Bordone graced the happy man's wall; but, alas! a friend, on making a close examination of the restored picture, discovered it to be but a clever copy—for which the owner of the original had paid a hundred and twenty pounds.

Again and again have picture-thieves proved too cunning for the guardians of the Dresden Museum. In 1747, three pictures disappeared simultaneously from its walls, one of which, by Mieris, the painter who valued his labour at a ducat an hour, was subsequently restored. Forty-one years later, the authorities were under the necessity of offering a thousand ducats to whomsoever should bring back a portrait by Seybold, Correggio's 'Reading Magdalen,' and Van der Werff's 'Judgment of Paris'—a painting less than two feet square, valued in Smith's *Catalogue Raisonné* at five hundred guineas. Four days afterwards, a box was found, near the Zwinger, containing the missing pictures by Seybold and Van der Werff; a discovery followed by the apprehension of the thief, a man of bad reputation, named Wogaz; and the finding under the flooring of a hayloft, of the frameless Correggio, which had been removed for the sake of the gold and precious stones with which it was decorated. In 1810, the Gallery was robbed once more—this time, of a small portrait in the style of Holbein, which has not been seen since. In the hope of baffling such predators for the future, an alteration was made in the method of hanging the smaller pictures; an alteration apparently answering its purpose, for no more thefts occurred until 1849, when Sophia von Langenzala carried off a little gem of Metsu's in broad daylight. She had the temerity to offer her prize for sale at Leipsic; but the work being recognised, she was sent to durance vile; the Metsu of course going back to its old quarters.

The feminine picture-stealer did her evil work unaided from within. This could scarcely have been the case with the bold thief or thieves who within the last two years entered the Royal Palace at Brussels, and not only carried off a quantity of jewellery from the queen's apartments, but had sufficient time at their disposal to visit three salons in turn, and cut out of their frames Madou's 'Quarrel in a Pothouse,' Van Regemorlet's sketch of an old man and a young girl holding a parrot, and Robie's 'Café in Egypt,' and 'View of Assouan'; getting off with their spoil, spite of lackeys within and soldiers without. The pictures so cleverly abstracted are familiar to thousands, and could not be bought by any one with safety. What will the thieves do with them? Are they destined to be lost for ever? or will they some day come again to light, like Raphael's 'Holy Family'?

found, in 1876, by a peasant of Lavagnola in a loft, and used by him to keep the wind from blowing through a broken window; to be rescued by an observant connoisseur, who, on examining his acquisition, found that the frame bore the arms of the Rovere family, and rightly inferred therefrom that the picture had at one time or another been stolen from its proper owners.

FOR HIMSELF ALONE.

A TALE OF REVERSED IDENTITIES.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLUNIE and Captain Dyson were quite content to find themselves out of sight and hearing of the rest of the party. Never before had the Captain had a listener at once so attentive and so appreciative. Really, Miss Pebworth was a most superior young woman, with intelligence and tastes far beyond the ordinary run of her sex.

They had been scrambling up-hill, and conversation had been an impossibility for the last few minutes; but now, having reached the summit, they sat down to rest on some large boulders, and the Captain resumed the thread of his broken narrative.

'When I again came to my senses,' he said, 'I found that the natives had bound me fast to the trunk of a large tree about a dozen yards from their encampment. I knew but too well the fate in store for me. On the morrow, I should be tortured; at sunset, I should be killed outright; and after that, I should be roasted and served up hot for supper.'

'O Captain Dyson, how dreadful—how very dreadful!'

'Shall I defer the rest of my narrative till another day?'

'Please, no. I am dying to know how you escaped; for you did escape, of course, or else you could not be here to tell me.'

'I did escape, Miss Pebworth; but you would never guess by what means.'

'Do not keep me in suspense, Captain Dyson.'

'The sun set, the camp-fires were lighted, and still I remained fast bound to the tree. I thought of many things—men do think of many things at such times. I thought with a pang that I should never again see my native land, my dear old England. And as I thought thus, my patriotic feelings awoke within me, and would not be controlled, and I began to sing *Rule Britannia* at the top of my voice. In those days I was considered to have rather a fine tenor voice. I lost it subsequently, when laid up with ague among the African swamps.'

'I should dearly love to have heard you singing on that memorable night.'

'Before I had reached the end of the first verse, there was a general movement among the savages. They sprang to their feet, and with loud guttural cries they came trooping towards me—men, women, and children. They surrounded me; and as I went on singing, there was the deepest silence among them. Even the babes in arms hushed their prattle. They had never heard anything like my singing before.'

'Ah, no; I can quite believe that.'

'By the time I had reached the end of the second verse, they were all in tears.'

'Your sweet tenor voice. Happy cannibals!'

'I was in the middle of the third verse, when the old chief came up to me. He was sobbing. He seized me by the shoulders, and rubbed his nose violently against mine, which is their way of making friends. Then his two head-men came and rubbed noses with me. I was released, and carried in triumph to the chief's hut. I sang to him all that night and all next day; then he said that he had had enough for a little while, and offered me his daughter in marriage.'

'O Captain Dyson! But you did not marry her?'

'Could you believe in the possibility of an English gentleman marrying the daughter of an African king?'

'Suddenly Clunie started to her feet. 'I declare if there isn't that odious Mr Drummond coming this way!' she exclaimed in a tone of vexation. 'It looks as if he had followed us on purpose.'

To return to Miss Deene. Mr Dempsey had not been gone more than a couple of minutes, when she was startled by seeing a stranger coming towards her through the trees. As he drew nearer, she saw that he was a burly, middle-aged man with homely features, that were set in a tangled maze of grizzled beard and moustache. He was dressed in a suit of gray tweed that had evidently seen better days; he wore a soft slouched hat; his thick-soled shoes were white with the dust of country roads; and he carried a stout walking-stick in his hand. He came up to Elma, lifted his hat for a moment, and said: 'Pardon me, but am I right in assuming that there is a picnic here to-day, and that my friends Mr Drummond and Mr Frobisher form part of the company?'

His voice was a very pleasant one, and so was his smile, as Elma had an opportunity of proving a little later on. Despite the stranger's homely looks and somewhat shabby attire, something whispered to Miss Deene that she was in the presence of no ordinary man.

'There has certainly been a picnic here to-day,' she replied, 'at which both Mr Frobisher and Mr Drummond were present. They will neither of them be very long before they are back. Perhaps if you wish to see them, you will not mind waiting.' She spoke with a somewhat heightened colour, and the stranger's dark eyes rested on her face with a look of undisguised admiration.

'Thank you very much,' he said. 'If you will allow me, I will await their return. I am staying to-night at an inn in the village; and it was my intention to walk over to Waylands—as I think Mr Frobisher's house is called—in the course of to-morrow. Hearing, however, that my friends were so near me to-day, I could not resist the opportunity of coming in search of them.'

'I have no doubt that they will be pleased to see you,' answered Elma, not knowing what else to say.

'By-the-by, I ought to apologise for not introducing myself before. My name is Bence Leyland.'

'Mr Leyland!' ejaculated Elma with a start of surprise. 'I have heard both Mr Frobisher and Mr Drummond speak of you many times.'

'Ah! Then they have not forgotten me. I am glad of that.'

'Did you think, Mr Leyland, that either of them was likely to forget you?'

'Well, no—they are hardly the sort of men to do that,' he answered with a little laugh. 'But may I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?'

'My name is Elma Deene. Mr Frobisher and I are cousins.'

Mr Leyland bowed.

At this moment a light cart with two servants from Waylands drove up. They had come to fetch away the hampers and other et-eteras pertaining to the picnic.

'Would you not like some refreshment, Mr Leyland?' asked Elma.

'Thank you. I should like a bottle of lemonade, if it is not too much trouble,' answered the painter.

He sat down on a fallen tree, and fanned himself with his hat while one of the servants opened the lemonade.

'With what lovely bits of genuine English scenery this neighbourhood abounds,' said Leyland a few moments later. 'They are at once a joy and a despair to a man like myself. We painters go on daubing canvas after canvas from youth till age; and the older we grow, the more we feel how futile are our efforts, and how few of her secrets Nature has deigned to reveal to us.'

'There was one landscape in the Academy this year,' answered Elma, fixing her eyes gravely on him, 'that to my mind seemed instinct with some of Nature's sweetest secrets. The breeze that stirred the tops of the larches on the hill seemed to fan my cheek as I looked. Those cloud-shadows that chased each other across the corn-fields in the valley were the very shadows that I have watched a hundred times as a child. Those scarlet poppies in the foreground were the same that I gathered long years ago. And yet, Mr Leyland, you know none of Nature's secrets!'

Bence Leyland rose abruptly. 'Let us walk a little way, Miss Deene,' he said, 'and find something else to talk about.'

Elma picked up her sunshade, and the two strolled slowly away side by side down one of the pleasant woodland ways.

'Can you guess, Miss Deene,' asked Leyland presently, 'why I am more glad to-day than I have been for a long time?'

Elma shook her head. 'It is impossible for me to guess, Mr Leyland.'

'I am glad because I am the bearer of good news for my dear friend, Dick Drummond.'

'Oh!'

Not a word more could she say. Her heart fluttered; her colour rose; the painter regarded her with curious eyes.

'Dear old Dick!' he went on presently, almost as if speaking to himself. 'How pleased I shall be to see him again!—And Frobisher too. Noble-hearted fellows both. What smokes we have had together; what talks we have had together; how we have argued and disputed, and in the end agreed to differ! "Oh! golden hours that never can return." No. *Jamais, jamais!*' He

spoke the last words almost in a whisper. The two walked on in silence.

Like a certain noble poet, Bence Leyland awoke one morning and found himself famous. He had been a struggling man for twenty years, trying his hardest to win fame and fortune, but not succeeding in his pursuit of either. Now and then he sold a picture; but in order to make ends meet, he was compelled to pawn more than he could sell. Now and then, a note of praise would be sounded by some critic more discerning than the rest of his tribe; but such notes were too few and far between to materially affect the fortunes of the artist. One day, however, a trumpet-note rang through England. A certain landscape painted by Leyland, into which he had thrown his whole heart and soul, came, by a happy concatenation of circumstances, under the eye of Mr Buskin the world-renowned critic. Then rang forth the clarion note. 'Those towering heights of gray lightning-riven rock, bones of a world of old,' wrote the great critic; 'that curving sweep of black, melancholy, wind-smitten heath, the home of Solitude for ten thousand years; that far-away fringe of low-lying horizon, where the moorland sweeps down to the sea, lurid with strange lights, pregnant with the menace of coming storm; those battlemented, rain-washed masses of cloud, hurrying up the sky as if bound for some great meeting-place of the winds: all these, I say, could only have been depicted for us with so much reverence and fidelity, with such power and vividness of conception, by the hand of undoubted genius. The man who wrought out this picture will one day stand in the foremost rank of England's great landscape painters.'

When Bence Leyland read these words, he cried, and he had not cried since he was a boy at his mother's knee. From that day, fame and fortune were at his feet. More commissions poured in upon him than he could execute; for he was a slow, painstaking, almost plodding worker, and would not be hurried by any man. Although his pictures now commanded more pounds than they had been deemed worth shillings a little time previously, this change in his circumstances in nowise altered Leyland's mode of life. He was a bachelor, and he still went on living in the same rooms in which he had now lived for so many years that they had come to be the only home he knew. He still frequented the same Bohemian club; he was still as indifferent to the ministrations of his tailor as of yore. Some of his old cronies asked each other why he did not migrate to St John's Wood, or to the still more fashionable art district of Kensington, as they would have done, had his good fortune been theirs; and there were even one or two who whispered that Leyland was growing miserly in his old age, and that he thought more of a shilling now than he used to do when he was not always sure where his next day's dinner was to come from.

Many a struggling dauber, to whom a saving hand had been held out just as the waters of oblivion seemed about to sweep over his head, could have told a tale that would have confounded such croakers, although the chief reason which induced Bence Leyland to look so carefully after the 'bawbees' was known to a few

only of his most intimate friends. His only sister had died, leaving behind her four orphan children to whom he was the nearest living relative. Those children had soon become as dear to him as if they were his own, and it was for the sake of them and their future career in life that Leyland hoarded his money in a way that he would never have thought of doing for himself alone.

After Frobisher had left him, Mr Pebworth wandered on, busy with his own thoughts; and of a very complex nature they were. Looking up at the point where two footpaths intersected each other, he saw coming towards him his daughter, Mrs Pebworth, Drummond, and Captain Dyson. As soon as Clunie perceived her father, she hurried forward to meet him. Taking him by the arm, and keeping him well out of earshot of the others, she said: 'I've a surprise in store for you, papa.'

'Youth, my dear, abounds with surprises; but at my time of life—'

'Now, don't begin to moralise, papa. Captain Dyson has proposed to me.'

'My darling Clunie! my sweet daughter! Come to my heart.'

'Bother!'

'This is indeed a rapturous moment—a moment that compensates for—'

'Papa, you are getting old and tiresome.'

'Fie, fie, my Clunie!'

'Listen. Captain Dyson has proposed; but he wishes to have a runaway marriage, without your knowledge or sanction.'

'A runaway marriage! Hum. Why runaway?'

'Oh, some silly notion he has got into his head about its being so romantic, and all that. And then he is afraid, or pretends to be afraid, that you will not give your consent.'

Mr Pebworth laughed softly, and patted the hand that rested on his arm. 'Let him cherish the delusion, my dear Clunie. The more difficult he finds it to win you, the greater the value he will set upon you afterwards.'

'We must give him no time to change his mind.'

'Not a day—not an hour. Let the match be a runaway match, by all means. He wants his little romance; let him have it—and pay for it.'

'I would much rather have had half-a-dozen bridesmaids, and have been married by a Dean.'

'Tut, tut! Don't be foolish. Who can have all they wish for in this world? In any case, you may depend upon my secrecy in the matter. You will leave a little note for me on my dressing-table—a slightly incoherent note—praying for my forgiveness, et-cetera. I shall be thunderstruck, grieved, indignant—a distracted father, in fact. I shall tear my hair—metaphorically—and call Captain Dyson the destroyer of my child. But by the time the honeymoon is over, I shall be prepared to forgive you both and to receive you with open arms.'

'Yes, papa.'

'Before you go, you may as well look up for me that passage in *King Lear* about an ungrateful daughter and a serpent's tooth. The quotation

will sound effective in the first strong burst of my grief and indignation.'

'Yes, papa. But will it be safe to marry without settlements?'

'First catch your husband. After that, my Clunie, it will be very strange if you and I cannot manipulate a simpleton like Captain Dyson in a way that will be eminently advantageous to both of us. Only, put a curb on your temper for a little while. You must on no account allow him to think you anything lower than a sublunary angel till all pecuniary matters are satisfactorily arranged. Humour his every whim; allow him still to believe himself the most fascinating of tiger-slayers; keep on listening to his stories with the same breathless interest that you listen to them now.'

'O papa, to what a fate you are dooming me! Those horrid stories, how I hate them!'

'After a time, you can have your revenge by refusing to listen to another as long as you live. You will take Boucher with you, of course. She is propriety itself, and will look after your comforts.'

'Yes, papa.'

'Have as many witnesses to the ceremony as possible—pew-openers, sextons, anybody, not forgetting Boucher the invaluable.'

'Yes, papa.'

'My blessing will go with you, Clunie. It is indeed a comfort to a parent's heart to see the excellent lessons he so carefully inculcated in the days of youth—the moral principles he so sedulously instilled—blossom forth into such golden fruit. Would that all parents were equally blessed!'

'Of course, all the arrangements have still to be made; but I shall be in a position to tell you more to-morrow.'

MR SEEBOHM IN SIBERIA.

UNTIL within the last few years, the immense territory belonging to the Russian Empire lying east of the Ural Mountains, and known as Siberia, and of which we gave some account last year in this *Journal* (No. 953), has been for the greater part unexplored, and a source of considerable speculation among geographers. Various travellers during the last three centuries have partially penetrated the country; but those journeys in most cases have been singularly barren of results. In the work now before us (*Siberia in Asia*. London: John Murray), the author, Mr Seeböhm, after giving a brief description of the ill-fated expedition into Siberia made by Sir Hugh Willoughby three hundred years ago during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, and also touching upon the recent discoveries and efforts of Professor Norden-sköld to re-establish a trade with Siberia *via* the Kara Sea, explains how, after meeting Captain Wiggins of Sunderland, who had previously had much experience in arctic travelling, he resolved to make a scientific expedition to the north of Siberia on his own account. It may be well here to state that the author had previously, in 1875, visited the delta of the Petchora, in north-east

Russia, accompanied by Mr Harvie Brown ; the results of which expedition were afterwards published in an interesting companion volume to the present, entitled *Siberia in Europe*.

Mr Seeböhm left London on the 1st of March 1877, and passing through St Petersburg, reached Nishni-Novgorod on the 10th inst. Here, after laying in stores, the travellers commenced the long sledge-journey that was to convey them more than half-way to their ultimate destination. Having visited various large Siberian towns on the route, they reached Yenesaïsk, on the Yenesai, on the 5th of April, at which place Mr Seeböhm engaged a servant for the purpose of skinning and preserving his ornithological collections, and also purchased a schooner, which he arranged should follow him up the river. Travelling north through the valley of the Yenesai, and visiting the decayed town of Toor-o-kansk, the author and his companions reached the Koo-ray-i-ka, an offshoot of the larger river, and the winter-quarters of Captain Wiggins' steamship the *Thames*, on the 23d of April, delighted again to hear English voices, and having sledged three thousand two hundred and forty English miles from Nishni-Novgorod.

While waiting for the breaking-up of the ice and the approach of summer, Mr Seeböhm took the opportunity of studying the natives of these little-known regions. The principal tribe he found to be the Ostyaks of the Yenesai, who are evidently very poor. They appear to have migrated southwards into the forest region, and now obtain their living on the banks of the mighty river, fishing in summer and hunting in winter. The author considers them to be a race of Samoyedes, but found it difficult to obtain accurate information, as the various tribes inhabiting the Yenesai districts are now much mixed with the Russians. The Ostyak dress consists of a short jacket of ornamented reindeer skin, long deerskin boots coming up to the thighs, and a 'gore'-shaped head-dress, tied under the chin, and edged with foxes' tails, one going over the brow and the other round the neck.

On the first of June, the ice on the Yenesai began to break up, and in a fortnight had entirely disappeared. The author describes this sudden change from midwinter to midsummer as 'a revolution of nature, on a scale so imposing, that the most prosaic of observers cannot witness it without feeling its sublimity.' The improvement in the weather enabled Mr Seeböhm to prosecute to a much greater extent his favourite ornithological researches, which had hitherto been without any important results. A general arrival of migratory birds set in, including many species well known in this country and throughout Europe. The first great rush of migration seems to take place as soon as the ice and snow melt. Indeed, many birds are in too great a hurry to reach their breeding-grounds, overshoot the mark, and finding no food, are obliged to turn back. Among the specimens procured at this time were two rare species of thrush, namely, the Dusky Ousel (*Merula fusca*) and the Dark Ousel (*Merula obscura*), both of which breed in Siberia, but whose eggs have hitherto been unknown ; also

the Ruby-throated Warbler (*Erythacus calliope*), which likewise breeds in the far north, and the song of which is described as little inferior to that of the nightingale.

Shortly after the break in the weather, the schooner previously purchased at Yenesaïsk arrived, and Captain Wiggins' vessel taking her in tow, the whole party proceeded down the river. By a most unfortunate accident, however, the steamer ran hopelessly aground, and the remainder of the voyage had to be made in the smaller vessel. This accident completely frustrated Captain Wiggins' plans, and prevented Mr Seeböhm reaching the Tundra in time for what he hoped would be the best part of his work. And this delay is also no doubt the reason of his not discovering the eggs of such birds as the curlew-sandpiper, knot, and sanderling, the nesting haunts of which birds are as yet unknown to naturalists.

On the 9th of July, having abandoned the ill-fated *Thames*, Captain Wiggins, with his own crew and the author on board, sailed north in the *Ibis*, and after passing several native villages, arrived at Doodinka on the 11th. From this point, we are told, commences 'the true Siberian Tundra, brilliant with flowers, swarming with mosquitoes, and full of birds. In sheltered places, dwarf willows and weeping birch were growing, and—we were only some fifty versts from the forests—here and there a few stunted larches. Winding through the Tundra was the track of what had once been the bed of a river, nothing now but a small deep valley forming a chain of isolated lakes and pools.' In this region Mr Seeböhm added to his collection many species of birds which hitherto have been but little known to naturalists ; and having thoroughly exhausted the ornithology of the district, he sailed north for Golchecka, which is situated on an island ; and from which point he again visited the Tundra.

'The history of animal and vegetable life on the Tundra,' says our author, 'is a very curious one. For eight months out of the twelve, every trace of vegetable life is completely hidden under a blanket six feet thick of snow, which effectually covers every plant and bush—trees there are none to hide. During six months of this time at least, animal life is only traceable by the footprints of a reindeer or a fox on the snow, or by the occasional appearance of a raven or snowy owl, wandering above the limits of forest growth, where it has retired for the winter. For two months in midwinter the sun never rises above the horizon, and the white snow reflects only the fitful light of the moon, the stars, or the aurora borealis. Early in February the sun just peeps upon the scene for a few minutes at noon, and then retires. Day by day he prolongs his visit more and more, until February, March, April, and May have passed, and continuous night has become continuous day. Early in June, the sun only just touches the horizon at midnight, but does not set any more for some time. At midday the sun's rays are hot enough to blister the skin ; but they glance harmlessly from the snow, and for a few days you have the anomaly of unbroken day in midwinter.'

'Then comes the south wind, and often rain, and the great event of the year takes place—the ice on the great rivers breaks up, and the blanket of snow melts away. The black earth absorbs

the heat of the never-setting sun ; quietly but swiftly, vegetable life awakes from its long sleep, and for three months a hot summer produces a brilliant Alpine flora, like an English flower-garden run wild, and a profusion of Alpine fruit, diversified only by storms from the north, which sometimes for a day or two bring cold and rain down from the arctic ice.

'But wonderful as is the transformation in the aspect of the vegetable world in these regions, the change in animal life is far more sudden and more striking. The breaking-up of the ice on the great rivers is, of course, the sensational event of the season. It is probably the grandest exhibition of stupendous power to be seen in the world. Storms at sea and hurricanes on land are grand enough in their way ; but the power displayed seems to be an angry power, which has to work itself into a passion to display its greatness. The silent upheaval of a gigantic river four miles wide, and the smash up of the six-feet-thick ice upon it at the rate of twenty square miles an hour, is to my mind a more majestic display of power ; but for all that, the arrival of migratory birds, so suddenly and in such countless numbers, appeals more forcibly to the imagination, perhaps because it is more mysterious.'

Shortly after his arrival at Golcheeka, Mr Seebohm found it necessary to abandon his previous intention of crossing the Kara Sea, and engaged a passage on board a steamer that was about to sail down the river as far as Yenesaisk, intending to finish the journey home overland. After steaming for twenty-two days down the Yenesai, Yenesaisk was reached on the 14th of August, whence the author shortly afterwards proceeded to Krasnoyarsk, and thence to Tomsk. Finding a steamer at Tomsk about to leave for Tyumain, he arrived at the latter town after a nine days' voyage, and there striking his previous route, and again visiting Moscow and St Petersburg, he arrived in London on the 20th of October, having covered altogether a distance of fifteen thousand one hundred and fifty-four miles. His chief regret was his inability to visit Irkutsk, which, although situated in the heart of Siberia, is considered to be the most European town of all the Russias, and where is found freer thought and higher civilisation generally than in any other portion of that vast country.

The reader obtains a very clear idea of the dishonesties practised by certain Russian merchants who have obtained a monopoly of almost the entire trade in Siberia. Such a thing as commercial integrity seems quite unknown on the Yenesai and other outlying districts ; and intercourse with the Russians is rapidly reducing the people to the lowest stages of poverty and degradation. The corruption existing among officials is also described as being past belief.

Although Mr Seebohm did not succeed in one of the principal objects of his expedition, namely, the discovery of the breeding haunts of the curlew-sandpiper, knot, and other birds, he was nevertheless enabled to study the nesting habits, and also found the eggs of many other little-known species. Among these may be mentioned the little bunting, Asiatic golden plover, and dusky ouzel, the eggs of all of which had previously been unknown to naturalists. The author also solved a hitherto uncertain question, namely, that the carrion and

hooded crows interbreed freely, and also that the hybrids are fertile. He collected a large number of specimens in all stages of plumage, showing the relationship in different proportions to both parents.

The general results of this journey may be considered highly satisfactory ; and Mr Seebohm is to be congratulated on having given his readers such an entertaining account of his experiences in a comparatively unknown country.

WHIMSICAL NOTICES AND INSCRIPTIONS.

EVERY one has heard the story of the Paisley thread-spinner who, having received a scratch upon his nose, made use of one of his bobbin labels in lieu of skin-plaster, and went about his business quite unconscious of the fact that he was claiming the possession of a much longer proboscis than ever Jumbo can hope to own. The improvised skin-plaster made the startling announcement—'Warranted three hundred yards.' Although this tale may be a fiction, genuine public notices of a like humorous or ridiculous nature are by no means rare. Adam Clarke relates that he saw exhibited outside an inn in Sweden this tantalising notice to the weary traveller : 'You will find excellent bread, meat, and wine within, provided you bring them yourself.'

Turning over a file of the *Caledonian Mercury* for 1789, we came upon the following curious inscription, which it was stated was to be seen over a cobbler's stall at Barnet : 'John Nust, Operator in Ordinary and Extraordinary, Mender of Soles, Uniter of the Disunited, Restorer of Union and Harmony though of ever so long and wide a separation. N.B.—Gives advice gratis in the most desperate cases, and never pockets his fee till he has performed a Cure.' This figurative cobbler was perhaps educated at the Yorkshire village school which in 1774 exhibited on a sign the following specimen of the learning to be had within : 'Wrighten and Readden and Trew Spellen and allso Marchants Accounts with double Entery. Post Skript Girlls and Bouys Boarded and good Yozitch for Chillder'en.' If the 'Yozitch' the children received at this Dotheboys Hall was on a level with the spelling, we pity them.

Dean Alford relates that the following perspicuous notice to engine-drivers was exhibited—for a short time only, let us hope—at one of our railway stations : 'Hereafter, when trains moving in an opposite direction are approaching each other on separate lines, conductors and engineers will be required to bring their respective trains to a dead halt before the point of meeting, and be very careful not to proceed till each train has passed the other.' Equally lucid was the placard announcing a pleasure-trip to Warkworth one day during the summer of 1881, in which was the following passage, which implies that the crew adopted the light and airy costume of our primitive ancestors : 'The *Gleaner* is one of the finest and fastest boats on the Tyne ; her accommodation is in every respect good and comfortable,

her crew skilful, steady, and obliging, *being newly painted and decorated for pleasure-trips.*

We can easily imagine that a notice like the next one we give was quite as likely to have the effect desired, as one couched in the usual stern tone, and concluding with the inevitable threat of prosecution. It is said to have been posted up at North Shields: 'Whereas several idle and disorderly persons have lately made a practice of riding on an ass belonging to Mr —, the head of the Ropery stairs; now, lest any accident should happen, he takes this method of informing the public that he has determined to shoot the said ass, and cautions any person that may be riding on it at the same time to take care of himself, lest by some unfortunate mistake he should shoot the wrong one.'

Every one knows how quickly a 'rest-and-be-thankful' seat becomes disfigured by initials. Rather a good attempt to put a stop to the objectionable practice was made by the late Mr Stirling, so well known as the Chairman of the North British Railway Company. His grounds, extending from Dunblane to Bridge of Allan, were open to the public on several days of the week; and on some of the seats placed for the benefit of the visitors there was fastened a cast-iron plate with this legend thereon: *Never cut a friend.* Could any one disobey such a touching appeal—at once a pun and an aphorism?

Writing names on window-panes is still more objectionable; but we are inclined to excuse the writer when he scribbles such lines as the following, which an eighteenth-century magazine assures us were scratched on the window of an inn at Abingdon:

Whence comes it that in Clara's face
The lily only has a place?
Is it because the absent rose
Has gone to adorn her husband's nose?

Of the various forms of scribbling mania which attack the budding and sometimes also the full-blown poet, resulting in these engravings on wood and glass we have referred to, perhaps the most curious type of the disease is developed when the poet adorns the back of a bank-note with verse. Wordsworth, Swift, Burns, and many others, have scribbled verses on stones, window-panes, and other odd places; but the last-mentioned poet is, we believe, the only one of the three who ever indulged in the luxury of sending forth a poem on the back of a bank-note. But the following effusion, we fear, was not the work of any poet known to fame. The lines appeared, if we remember right, on the back of a Union Bank of Scotland note, which passed through our hands many years ago; and note and poem have no doubt long since been included in the banker's Index Expurgatorius, and committed to the flames. The lines were entitled 'Ode on an Owed Note,' and were as follow:

I marked the 'cutest teller in the land;
A note he flourished in his hand—
A note whose rare effulgence shed
A halo round about his head.
He threw 't—I caught it in my hand,
And was the happiest mortal in the land.
But now, alas! a claim has come,
And I throughout the world must run
Without my long-loved One Pound Note.
A tailor claimant has appeared,
With face unwashed and beard unsheared,

Who says: 'That note must pay your coat'
With many sighs, with many tears,
It goes now to the man of shears.
'Farewell, farewell, thou gem of notes!
Give pleasure to the man of coats;
And may he learn before too late to mend;
"The quality of mercy is not strained,
But bloweth like the roaring gale,"
As Shakespeare says' I now conclude.
To all, my peace, good-will, and gratitude,
And to all notes I cry, 'All hail!'

From the many quaint rhymes that have been written beneath portraits, we select one which was to be seen under that of an old hostler at the *Rose and Crown* in St John's Street, Clerkenwell, a hundred and fifty years ago:

This is that honest hostler of great note,
Who never robbed a corn-bin of a groat.
Could horses speak, they'd spread his fame;
But since they can't—John Knight's his name.

Thomas Hood, Charles Dickens, and others have exercised their wits in framing humorous titles for false or dummy book-backs, to be placed so as to hide a door or blank space in a library. Such the reader will remember was the character of the Xenophon, in sixteen volumes, which excited the curiosity of the 'Bashful Man,' whose misadventures at a friend's house Henry MacKenzie has so graphically described. Laying his hand on the first volume, and pulling it forcibly, relates the Bashful Man, he was horrified to find that instead of books, 'a board which by leather and gilding had been made to look like sixteen volumes, came tumbling down, and unluckily pitched upon a Wedgwood inkstand on the table under it.' He certainly did not make the calamity less ludicrous when he attempted to stop the current of ink that trickled to the floor by means of his cambric handkerchief.

Hood's list of dummy books included the following: On the Affinity of the Death Watch and the Sheep Tick, Malthus's Attack of Infantry, John Knox on Death's Door, Debrett on Chain Piers, Cursory Remarks on Swearing, Hoyle on the Game Laws, and Percy Vere, in forty volumes.

Among others, Dickens had the following dummy books in his study at Tavistock House: Jonah's Account of the Whale, The Gunpowder Magazine (four volumes), On the Use of Mercury by the Ancient Poets, The Books of Moses and Sons (two volumes), Burke (of Edinburgh) on the Sublime and Beautiful, and Lady Godiva on the Horse.

A public library is not the place where one would expect to meet with sham book titles; but a book met the gaze of the late Professor de Morgan of Cambridge, on his first visit to the reading-room of the Museum, which might have been mistaken for a 'dummy.' He began his inspection, he says, at the ladies' end, where the Bibles and theological works are placed; and the very first book he looked at the back of had in flaming gold letters the startling and profane title, 'Blast The Antinomians.' Thus did the binder apostrophise the sect whose history had been written by Dr Blast, by omitting the separating line between the first two words.

We are assured of the genuineness of the following curious notice, addressed, quite recently, to the members of a Friendly Society, which need

not fear a 'run' upon it, if the procedure therein described be rigidly adhered to: 'In the event of your death, you are requested to bring your book policy and certificate at once to the agent, Mr —, when your claims will have immediate attention.'

Those who write public notices, however, sometimes have the tables turned upon them by some waggish reader, who appends or deletes a few words or letters, which has the effect of making the intimation set forth a different meaning from the one intended by the original notifier. We will conclude with two such anecdotes, and in the last it will be seen that the biter was bit. Recently, a shop-keeper of Stambridge had his feelings outraged by an addition made by a passing mischief-maker to a notice he had affixed to his shop-door. The aggrieved man thus tells his melancholy tale to the editor of the *Essex Weekly News*: 'I had to attend at Rochford last Thursday as prosecutor in a Fifth of November case; therefore I wrote over my shop-door: "Closed for a few hours;" and when I returned, I found some one had written: "Drunk in bed; can't get up." As this may injure me in my business, I beg to state that I am and have been an abstainer for more than two years.'

A few days previous to the beginning of a session, this brief and serious-enough-looking notice was affixed to the notice-board at the entrance of one of the class-rooms of Edinburgh University: 'Professor — will meet his classes on the 4th inst.' On the opening day, a student, who had probably attended the class during the previous session, and had imbibed some of the well-known humour of his witty preceptor, erased the letter *c* of the word 'classes.' A group of youths remained in the vicinity of the entrance to observe how the Professor would receive the intimation, which now set forth that he would 'meet his lasses on the 4th inst.' As the Professor approached, he observed the change that had been made, and quietly taking out his pencil, made some further modification and passed on, a quiet smile overspreading his features. The notice now finally stood: 'Professor — will meet his asses on the 4th inst.'

THE MONGOOSE.

EPHEMERAL notoriety is not limited to the canine race, and every animal has its day. The prominence accorded to the Colorado beetle was eclipsed by the claims of Jumbo, who in his turn gave way to the ants, bees, and wasps, re-introduced to public notice by Sir John Lubbock. Now the mongoose, or mungusc, as it is sometimes spelled, by no means an obscure representative of creation previously, is well to the fore, and has become the theme of burning controversies in connection with its recent acclimatisation in Jamaica, and proposed establishment as an addition to the fauna of Australia and New Zealand.

When one speaks of the mongoose, the common Indian species may usually be understood as indicated by the title. People who visit zoological gardens and collections are often surprised to find no mongoose there, the fact being that it

is better known to naturalists as the Ichneumon—an animal of the weasel tribe—and is usually so labelled in menageries and museums. There are no less than twenty-one different species besides the mongoose (*Herpestes griseus*), or gray ichneumon, which forms the subject of the discussions going on at the present time; and several of these are found in India.

So widespread is the reputation which the mongoose has acquired as a destroyer of serpents, that the mere mention of it invariably presents it to the imagination in that character; and dealers, in selling one to a hesitating customer who is seeking a new pet, are often asked: 'How shall I get snakes to feed it on?' The inevitable mystery which seems inseparable from a reptile seems to infect everything with which it is brought into contact, and the little ichneumon is enveloped in a cloud of fables relative to its 'antipathy' to serpents, the purely disinterested motives which lead it to search them out, and its immunity from the effects of the venom, when bitten by poisonous kinds, owing to its knowledge of an antidote in a certain herb, leaf, or root, which it runs and eats directly its antagonist is slain. Such theories were dispelled long ago by scientists, though they still hold ground in vulgar acception. The mongoose undoubtedly kills snakes when it gets the chance; but it does so for the prosaic purpose of eating them, and not from any vengeful antipathy. It would be hard to believe that it could enter into the scheme of creation to place any animal upon the earth for the express reason of its being wantonly destroyed by any other, independently of any useful object. The mongoose devours serpents, as it devours birds, rats, eggs, and many other things, and certainly betrays no preference for an ophidian diet when it has a choice of food. When well fed, it will not kill them; pet specimens often lower themselves in the estimation of their owners by refusing to exhibit their vaunted propensity and skill in the presence, or reminiscence, or even anticipation of their customary plate of meat.

Some years ago, when the ravages of the cane-rats became so serious in Jamaica as really to affect the prospects of the colony, the Giant Toad (*Bufo agua*), a monster batrachian, which attains the size of a chicken in the swamps of Guiana and Central America, was introduced into the island, and did much good by devouring the young rodents. It proved ineffectual, however, to cope with the pest thoroughly; and the gray ichneumon has now been acclimatised there, with such benefit to the plantations, that it is said that over a hundred thousand pounds a year are saved by it in the districts where it has multiplied.

Are we to infer from its success in Jamaica that it will prove an equal blessing to the antipodes, if permanently quartered on the rabbit-ridden countries, as is proposed? Obviously their cry for help is not without cause, when we hear of a quarter of a million acres being abandoned by one owner, after he had spent no less than three thousand pounds in futile efforts at extermination; of half a million rabbits being killed in a few months on the property of another; and of seven million skins being forthcoming in a single year, the fury trophies representing

only a portion of the number of bunnies actually destroyed. In Australia, will the mongoose effect what the savage and rapacious dingoes seem powerless to accomplish, and rid the country of her terrible death-addlers as well? And supposing it does effect such a clearance, what will be the after-considerations?

The acclimatisation of an animal in any country, except in a domestic state, is always, to say the least of it, a perilous experiment. Nature has apportioned to every region its due share of animal and vegetable life, in the forms best adapted to neutralise excess; and this balance has been disturbed in New Zealand by the introduction of the rabbit. We have seen what the rabbit can do in a quarter of a century; we have seen in many instances what small birds—hailed with sentimental delight by far-off exiles as winged tokens of home, or imported, as in the States, to quell some insect plague—can bring down upon their patrons in foreign lands; in short, it may be said that nearly every acclimatised creature has proved to be more or less a nuisance—a harsh and unpleasant truth.

Let us look for a moment at the probabilities which the mongoose offers by its establishment in these colonies. Most likely the climate of New Zealand would not be favourable to its increase—the common weasel is already suggested as a substitute for it there; but there is no doubt it would do well in Australia. The rabbit, enormously prolific, and very considerably greater in bulk than a rat, would be much more slowly reduced in numbers than the latter animal; for, be it remembered, the mongoose kills for food, and not for killing's sake; and a carcass almost, if not quite equal in size to its own body would furnish its larder for some time. Before the rabbits can be exterminated, therefore, or even appreciably diminished, the destroyer must have enormously multiplied; and when their legitimate prey is exhausted, what are the captors going to do? Starve, or eat each other? Certainly not, as long as poultry-farms exist. Eggs constitute a favourite food of the mongoose at all times, whether snakes and rabbits are to be had or not. In short, it is as much to be dreaded as a fox in the henroost. Furthermore, though gentle and tame enough when domesticated, in its wild state it is fierce and glutinous, fearless as a rat when at bay or pressed by hunger, and would not hesitate to attack even sheep when rendered desperate by famine.

The ultimate issue of the experiment in Jamaica remains to be seen; but there is less danger to be anticipated in a country which swarms with the smaller forms of animal life, as that island does. Horrified protestations were raised the other day when somebody named the jackal as a suitable antidote to the rabbits in Australia; nevertheless, it may be doubted whether such a creature, or some cat, like the puma or ocelot, would not prove a safer introduction in the end, doing greater execution by smaller numbers, and being more readily hunted off when no longer required.

Better to bear those ills we have—especially when we have incurred them by our own act and deed—than fly to others that we know not of; but as it is proverbially an ill wind that blows nobody good, and every cloud has a silver lining, so the rabbit affliction already presents a bright

side. Messrs M'Call and Sons, of Paysandu Ox-tongue celebrity, are setting up factories in various parts of Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania, for the purpose of exporting cooked rabbits in tins; and if the utilisation of the baneful 'varmint' in this or any way can only be made a recognised industry and source of profit, the little mongoose may be left to do battle with cobras and other pests, undisturbed in his happy Indian hunting-grounds.

ELLISLAND.

THE year was in its prime, for June
Was treading on the heels of May;
The sun was climbing to high noon,
The breezes faint made sportive play,
When by the winding Nith we strayed
With pilgrim feet, that we might stand
Where, 'neath the humble roof-tree's shade,
Oft sung the Bard of Ellisland.

We saw the lassie buskit neat,
The bonnie lassie herding yowes,
And heard the sporting lambkins bleat
Among the yellow broomy knowes;
The ploughman whistling at the plough,
He guided straight wi' tenty hand,
Where rigs lay red, along the howe,
The fertile howe of Ellisland.

We gazed adown Dalswinton's plain,
Across her glowing woods and braes;
And lilted o'er again some strain,
Through which he chanted forth their praise.
We watched the shadows come and go
Where high the hills in grandeur stand,
And fleecy clouds were drifting slow
Across the blue o'er Ellisland.

We listened as from leafy dell
The feathered chorus rung out clear,
And from the sky there warbling fell
The trill of lark upon our ear:
And as we heard the mingling strain,
We wished that some magician's wand
Might yet be waved, to bring again
The poet soul to Ellisland.

We marked the daisy loved so dear,
The thistle springing 'mong the corn,
The op'ning rosebud on the brier,
The lingering primrose 'neath the thorn;
We marked them all with loving eye,
Yet plucked them not with ruthless hand,
But left them there, to bloom and die,
Upon the holms of Ellisland.

While down its dale the Nith shall go,
'Where Comyns ance held high command,'
While Solway's tide shall ebb and flow,
And lap its shores of yellow sand;
While, like a guardian sentinel,
High Criffel still shall proudly stand;
While love in loving hearts shall dwell,
Wilt thou be loved, dear Ellisland!

A. P.

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